

HOTELS IN TOURISM: WHAT CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE THE CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS CHALLENGES OF THE HILLY TERRITORY?

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ABSTRACT

The decentralization process initiated in Benin since 2003, supported by several legislative texts, including Act No. 97-029 of 15 January 1999 on the organization of municipalities in the Republic of Benin, authorizes each territorial community to organize development on the basis of the potential of its territory.

The objective of this study is to contribute to a better knowledge of the hotel infrastructure capacity of the hill territory. The methodology used combines both documentary research and field work. This work consisted in carrying out a survey through a preliminary visit and then in-depth surveys of the promoters and managers of accommodation facilities in the said territory and individual interviews with the mayors. Data processing was done using Sphinx, Arc-View and Excel software. The analysis of the results was carried out using the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) model. The results show that in the six municipalities of the hill territory, 730 hotel rooms have been identified and can be classified into three (3) main categories, namely inns (16), motels (11) and hotels (21) with an accommodation capacity of 1460 people at the rate of 02 people per hotel room. In view of the results obtained, it can be concluded that the hilly territory has a significant capacity for accommodation despite the shortage of hotel rooms that occurs during the major cultural and religious events that the territory hosts each year. The federation of efforts to create an Inter municipal environment conducive to the promotion of tourism and hotels will support the identity dynamics of the territory and strengthen the employability of young people, which is a guarantee of sustainable development.

KEYWORDS: *Hill Territory, Benin, Tourism, Hotel Industry, Sustainable Development*

INTRODUCTION

Investment in the hotel sector to increase its capacity is most often the yardstick for measuring the effort made in a national or regional territory to develop tourism (Dumas, 2004). This investment decision requires an inventory of the hotel package in the light of the major cultural events taking place in the area concerned. The location of hotels is changing, as is their contribution to regional development. Over time, the original support function of the hotel business has been coupled with a calling function, as evidenced by resort hotels and other resorts that integrate multiple sporting or cultural activities and become, by the same token, real tourist resorts, sometimes clearly cut off from the surrounding physical and socio-cultural support (Cazalais, 1998). To be popular and prosperous, destination hotels, let alone springs, need adequate service infrastructure in addition to a sufficient and skilled workforce. For Gillet (2011), a tourist

destination is any accessible tourist territory, which includes accommodation, transport infrastructure, as well as activities, entertainment and services.

The thorough development of a territory's tourist resources leads to activities that sometimes require global development, with a rational definition of the related hotel facilities to be put in place.

The territory of the hills, vast of 13,951 Km², has a diversified hotel pack, despite its insufficiency, to accommodate the curious who tread the ground of the department during the major annual cultural events that it hosts. However, two important questions arise: what is the accommodation capacity of the territory? What is the gastronomy of the territory capable of accompanying the tourist promotion in order to maintain the customer?

DATA AND METHODS

• Geographical Scope Of The Study

Composed of six (06) municipalities: Bantè, Dassa-Zoumè, Glazoué, Ouèssè, Savalou and Savè all scattered with hills, hence its name as the department of hills, the territory of Les Collins is located in the central region of Benin between 1°40' and 2°15' east longitude, and 8°20' and 8°50' north latitude. It is bounded to the northwest by the Donga department, to the northeast by the Borgou department, to the east by the Federal Republic of Nigeria, to the west by the Togo department, to the southwest by the Zou department and to the southeast by the Plateau department (Figure 1).

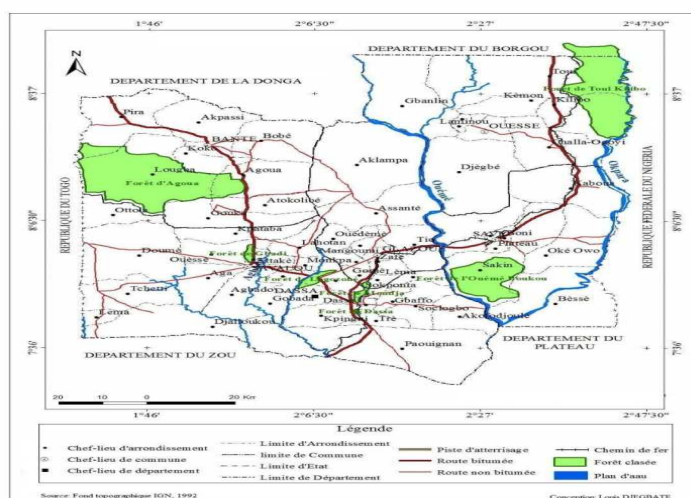


Figure 1: Location of the Hill Territory.

NATURE OF THE DATA COLLECTED

The data collected as part of this study relate to the tourist sites and attractions of the hills: they take into account the inns, motels and hotels in the territory that make up the hills' hotel park. Therefore, the data related to catering, which is reflected in local and foreign gastronomy, have been retained.

• Data collection techniques and materials

Several research techniques were used in this research. These are documentary research, direct observations in the field, interviews with the promoters of accommodation and catering facilities, questionnaires sent to twelve (12) municipal

officials. In addition, the reasoned choice technique made it possible to interview 138 resource persons across the six municipalities of the department according to the following criteria:

- Have lived on the territory of the Hills for the past ten years.
- be a promoter of accommodation or catering facilities operating in the territory with at least five (05) years' seniority;
- have a customer registration register for developers of accommodation facilities;
- Be employed in an accommodation and catering structure in the territory.

It should be noted that the selection criteria are not cumulative. In order to make a good comparison followed by a relevant analysis of the data, 182 people were interviewed. By category, 48 promoters of accommodation structures, 12 communal agents, in this case planners, 06 mayors, 18 resource persons, 48 hotel employees and 50 users/hotel customers were interviewed.

- **Data processing and analysis of results**

At the end of the fieldwork, the data collection sheets completed were grouped by target and analyzed.

The qualitative data were subjected to content analysis; simple statistical processing was carried out on the quantitative data through frequency calculation according to the formula $F = (n_i / N) \times 100$ where F denotes neither the frequency, nor the number of persons who provided the answer I and N the total number of persons interviewed. The results obtained were analyzed using the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) model. Ranking criteria taking into account:(originality / authenticity, accessibility, historical roots, state of conservation/cleanliness, recognition/recognition, territorial representativeness, advertising around the resource, tourist flows, integration into tourist circuits, potential demand) were applied to classify the inventoried structures in order of importance.

RESULTS

- **Hotels in the Hills**

As is often said, "A good stay is recognized by the accommodation, food and hospitality". Thus, one of the first conditions that a traveler must ensure before departure is accommodation.

The territory of hills currently has a capacity of around 730 rooms with a capacity of 1460 people at the rate of 02 people per hotel room. All the rooms are distributed in all the communes of the department (field work, 2019). The number of beds corresponds to the commercial accommodation capacity of the inns, motels and hotels, i.e. a total of 21 hotels, 11 motels and 16 inns throughout the country (table 1). Most of the hotel package is concentrated in the municipalities of Savalou and Dassa-Zoumè, with 17 and 13 accommodation facilities respectively. However, it is also important to note that the number of beds corresponding to the reception of relatives and friends "accommodation at home" promoted by the territory's tourist offices is not counted, whereas this attendance is very common and representative in the Hills.

Below the analysis of Figure 2, it is clear that the municipality of Dassa-Zoumè concentrates 269 hotel rooms, i.e. 36.84 % of the total capacity of the territory, followed by the municipality of Savalou with 205 rooms representing 28.08 % of the total. These two municipalities, which alone concentrate 474 rooms out of the 730, or 64.93 % of the

total accommodation capacity in the territory, provide more than half of the hotel package of hills, followed by the municipalities of Savè, Glazoué, Bantè and Ouèssè, which each have 14.52 %, 13.42 %, 04.79 % and Ouèssè 02.32 % of all rooms respectively in its territory. This concentration (Figure 2) of the hotel structures in Dassa-Zoumè and Savalou is explained by an awareness not only of the municipal authorities' need to support tourist operators and promoters of accommodation and catering structures to get involved, but also of the operators' own awareness of the major cultural and religious events of a tourist nature that both municipalities host, namely: the patron saint's feast of August 15 and the cult and cultural feast of yam in Savalou, the Marian pilgrimage Our Lady of Arigbo of Dassa-Zoumè added to the Festival of Arts and Culture Idaasha (FACI) between Glazoué and Dassa-Zoumè, the Festival of Laboko Yam (FILA) in Glazoué, the Festival of Mahi Arts of Ilé -Ifè (FAMI) which could enable them to make a good turnover. From the reading of the figure, it appears that the municipalities of Ouèssè and Bantè, despite the efforts of the local authorities, do not have accommodation facilities that are suitable and dignified for receiving foreigners.

Table 1: Synthesis of Accommodation Structures / Rooms on the Territory of the Hills

N	Municipalities	Hosting			Capacity (Number of Bedroom)
		Inns	Motel	Hotel	
01	Bantè	1	1	1	35
02	Dassa-Zoumè	5	4	4	269
03	Glazoué	0	2	3	98
04	Ouèssè	03	00	00	17
05	Savalou	5	2	10	205
06	Savè	2	2	3	106
	Total	16	11	21	730

Source: Field work, August 2019

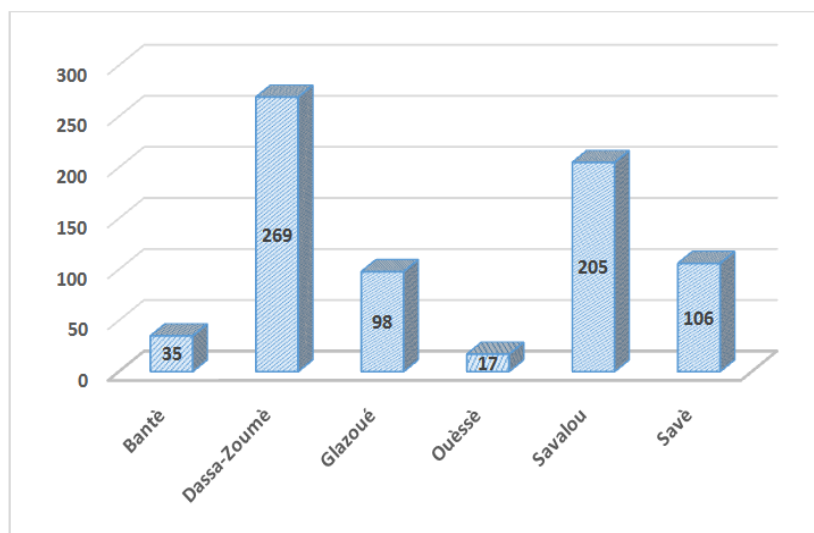


Figure 2: Geographical Concentration of Rooms on the Territory of the Hills.

Hierarchical Distribution of Hotel Structures

The analysis of the quality and compliance of accommodation and catering facilities by level shows the following trend Figure 3 below.

Level 1 accommodation and catering facilities (facilities meeting at least 8 of the 10 criteria defined in section 2.2)

account for 21.15 % of the supply and are largely concentrated in the municipalities of Dassa-Zoumè and Savalou, while level 2 (facilities meeting at least 6 of the 10 criteria defined in section 2.2) represent 28.84 %. Levels 3 (structures meeting at least 4 of the 10 criteria defined in section 2.2) and 4 (structures meeting at least 2 of the 10 criteria defined in section 2.2) combined account for 49.99 % of the accommodation offer. This analysis shows that despite the importance of the accommodation structures inventoried in the territory, only 21.15% are of an acceptable level and provide the necessary facilities to accommodate foreigners. In this category we can mention the hotels JECO, Miracle and the shade of the Marian sanctuary in Dassa-Zoumè, the hotels F&F, Calypso-Benin and la Reference in Savalou, Bethel motel, Ambassador Hotels and the Riverofhills in Glazoué and Prestige and la Joie in Save. Level II structures are moderately acceptable, those of levels III and IV are structures of the lower class but which at given times of the year contribute to maintaining the image of the hills destination by strengthening the territory's reception capacity.

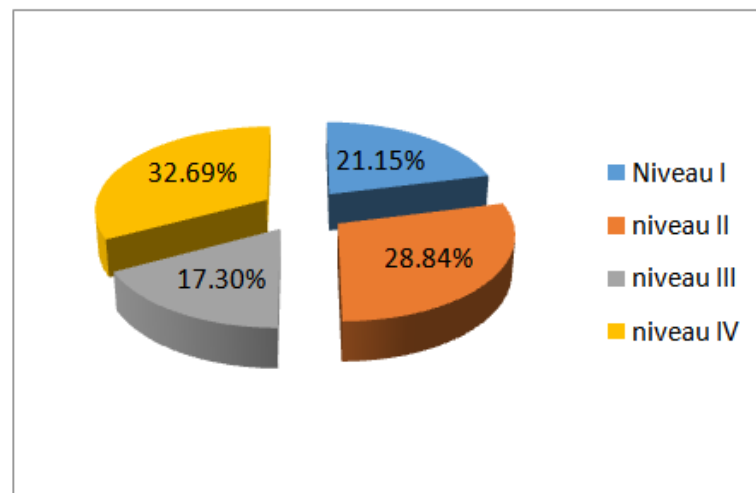


Figure 3: Hierarchical Distribution by Level of Hosting Infrastructure.

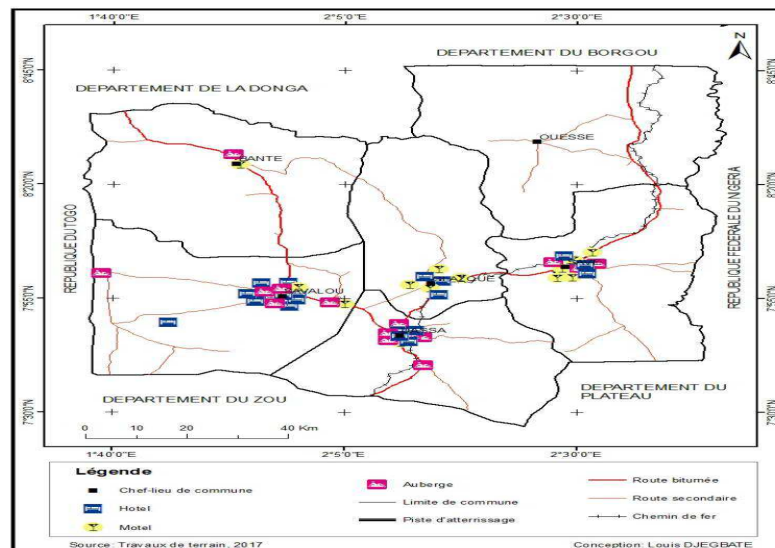


Figure 4: Summary of Accommodation Structures in the Hills Territory.

Restoration in the Hills

- **Local gastronomy**

The gastronomic richness of the Hills is special and almost identical to the whole territory. This gastronomic richness is based on the culinary art of the territory's identity: yams and their derivatives. It can be crushed and seasoned with seed sauce (groundnuts (*hypogaea*), sesame seeds (*Sesamum indicum*), etc.) accompanied by the sticky *Corchorus olitorius* (horsehair), *Abelmoschus esculentus* (gumbo), etc. or sauces made from aromatic plants: Gambia tea in French or in the local fungi language (tchiayo / kiyoyo) whose scientific name is: *Ocimum gratissimum*, *Ocimum basilicum* (akohoun), (aklala/aglala) in local language. It can be also fried. The gastronomy is also based on the dough made from corn with the different derivatives that are: seasoned red dough (amiwo), bomiwo, wofléflé, etc.

We can see that the territory of the Hills has many restaurants, marquis, refreshments or even cafeterias. In these structures, the proposed local and foreign specialties are listed in Table 2 below.

Below the table 2 these restaurants and marquis offer more than 41 % of African specialties. The advantage is that the customer has a wide choice of choices to be served the popular dishes or new ones. The culinary habits being identical in the six (06) municipalities of the territory, the specialties offered are relatively the same from one bar-restaurant to another.

Newness or differentiation would allow these structures to attract more customers. Indeed, the vast majority of restaurants are satisfied with satisfying the demand of the local population, especially during periods when there are no cultural or festive activities during the year. More than 94 % of the structures offer specialties from around the world. Nevertheless, just like African specialties, the structures adapt only to the demand of the local population. Thus few structures offer pork or rabbit, yet the demand is high in the department. The supply, whether African or global, is very low. In general, the structures do not wish to differentiate themselves for fear of making a bad turnover but work more on the quality approach which includes hygiene to attract more customers during major cultural events.

Table 2: Local and Foreign Culinary Offers

Local Specialties	Seasoning	Foreign Specialties
Corn paste (white, red, bomiwo, wofléflé...)	Vegetable sauce (mantindjan with or without mustard, peanut sauce, <i>Ocimum gratissimum</i> (tchiayo), sticky) Meat: sheep, beef, chicken, goat, rabbit, squirrel, aulacode...	Omelette
Yam cossette paste	Vegetable sauce (mantindjan with or without mustard, <i>Ocimum gratissimum</i> (tchiayo), sticky crinrin, gumbo)	Spaghetti
Red corn dough	Fruit tomato juice, seed sauce	Rice
Crushed yam	Vegetable sauce, peanut sauce, <i>Ocimum gratissimum</i> (tchiayo), sticky, sesame	Fries
Akassa	Vegetable sauce (mantindjan) with or without mustard, peanut sauce, tchiayo, sticky	couscous
Rice with fat	Tomato and onion juice chopped with fish and Peulh cheese	cassoulet
Attieke	Tomato and onion juice chopped with fish	salad
Piron (gari paste)	Blood juice (kpetè) with pork meat	chawarma
Atassi (a mixture of rice and beans)	Tomato and onion juice chopped with fish and Peulh cheese	Pea

Source: Field work, Djègbatè, 2019

DISCUSSIONS

Several authors have carried out studies on the state of the property in terms of accommodation capacity and the link between hotels and tourism in a territory of high cultural value and have arrived at results similar to those of the present study carried out in Benin in the Hills. Several researchers also discussed the role of hotels in tourism and the economy, among other things to analyse the trades and the means to be implemented in order to ensure the best possible training of staff and to evaluate the performance of establishments. Indeed, according to Cazalais (1998), the hotel industry generates direct and indirect benefits that can contribute significantly to the economic dynamism of the regions, their organization and the development of their respective areas. A brief overview of a few examples showed that tourism development structurally structured around hotels benefits the economy of destinations and regional development. For (Moreau, 2003; WTO, 1993; Paci, 1993), on the other hand, the writings are very discreet on the link between hotels and regional development, especially in its spatial dimension. For them, the hotel industry generates direct and indirect benefits that can make a significant contribution to the economic dynamism of the regions, their organization and the development of their respective areas. Cazalais, (1998) states that, articulated around the hotel industry, tourism must act in the minds of decision-makers as a lever for the development of a region by supporting the redevelopment of infrastructures, the appearance of new festivals and the enhancement of the surrounding countryside.

The control of regional development induced by tourism and more specifically by the hotel industry often escapes the driving forces of the destination and, sometimes, even the full authority of the Cazalais government levels, (1998).

In short, for inclusive tourism development, all researchers who have conducted research in the field are unanimous on the need for hotels and tourism to complement each other in order to impact the employability of young people and the economic life of a territory.

CONCLUSIONS

The inventory of accommodation facilities carried out as part of this study shows that the hill territory has three categories of accommodation facilities for foreigners: hostels, motels and hotels, which are located in all municipalities in the territory. The municipalities of Dassa-Zoumè and Savalou alone account for 64.93% of the territory's accommodation capacity, which makes them the leading accommodation center in the hills.

It is imperative, in view of the results, that local governments and inter municipal authorities in the territory develop a policy of support and a favorable environment for the promoters of level III and IV accommodation structures so that these structures meet the needs of the territory's clients and increase the accommodation capacity of the Hills in particular and Benin in general.

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